



CITY OF GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE PROJECT APPLICATION COVER SHEET

I: Project Information

Project Title: Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program

Project Summary: Based on a long-running successful model in Rockport operated by Action, Inc. and funded through the Rockport CPA, the Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program offers temporary rental and mortgage subsidies as well as supportive and budget services to those experiencing significant difficulties retaining their housing due to financial problems. The program is focused on low- to moderate-income households who face temporary setbacks such as illness, job loss, job reduction, or other tragedies. To qualify applicants must make 80% of area median income or lower. Subsidies will reduce incrementally over the course of up to one year while households work toward becoming self-sufficient by participating in budget counseling and working with Action, Inc. staff to address barriers and access wrap-around services such as fuel assistance, job training, assistance with public benefits, etc. We anticipate serving 15 Gloucester households with initial subsidies of up to \$1650 each, with the remaining funds contributing toward costs related to supportive services. Each household will participate for six months to one year.

Estimated start date: 1.1.16 Estimated completion date: 12.31.16

CPA Program Area (check all that apply):

Open Space Historic Preservation
☒ Community Housing Recreation

II: Applicant/Developer Information

Contact Person with primary responsibility for project: Maggie Howard

Organization (if applicable): Action, Inc.

Mailing Address: 180 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930

Daytime phone #: 978-282-1000

Fax #: 978-283-0523

E-mail address: mhoward@actioninc.org

III: Budget Summary

Total budget for project: \$90,000

CPA funding request: \$40,000

CPA request as percentage of total budget: 44%

Applicant's Signature: _____

Printed Name and Position: Timothy L. Riley, Executive Director

Narrative

Project Description

Utilizing funds from the City of Gloucester's Community Preservation Committee as well as private foundation funding, Action, Inc. aims to develop a new Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program. This program will provide the City of Gloucester an opportunity to reach out to residents who are in extreme financial need and to give those residents the opportunity to stabilize themselves and their families so that they can continue to live in Gloucester. The program emphasizes self-sufficiency, rather than dependence, and aims to "graduate" each participant from the program between six months and one year. The program will be based on an identical program which Action, Inc. has been successfully operating in the town of Rockport for the past six years with the support of the Rockport Community Preservation Committee.

The primary goal of this program is to support community housing for low-income residents of Gloucester. The program will assist approximately 15 Gloucester households who are experiencing significant difficulties retaining their housing because of financial barriers. The goal is to provide rental subsidies to the renters' landlords and mortgage subsidies to the homeowners' mortgage companies. In addition, program participants will be required to participate in in-kind supportive and budgeting services.

The Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program is for households who face temporary financial setbacks due to hardships such as sickness (physical, mental, or emotional), job reduction, job loss, or other tragedies. While the program intends for participants to transition out of the program and become self-sufficient after six months, in circumstances in which hardships continue following the six-month mark, subsidies at a reduced rate may continue on a month-to-month basis for up to one year. If qualifying hardships strike again following a participant's completion of the program, that participant may be permitted to return at a later date.

In order to qualify for the program, applicants must be financially eligible (based on 80% of the median income for Gloucester) and must be residents of Gloucester. The program will focus not just on low-income households, but on households which have experienced an unexpected drop in income due to unforeseen circumstances, rendering them unable to pay their rent or mortgage in full. Participants will be selected according to their financial need, their prospects for future financial stability, and their willingness to utilize all aspects of the program. The amount of financial assistance will also vary on a case-by-case basis, according to number of applicants, individual needs, etc. We will aim to assist as many households as possible with the available funding, but in general we anticipate that participants will pay approximately 40% or more of their income toward their rent or mortgage payments and the program will pay the balance. If participants do not have income, we will work with them to secure income. Each landlord will be required to sign a contract in which they agree to accept the funds and not evict the tenant for the duration of the program. Those who are already in Gloucester public housing or senior housing will not be eligible for the program because they are already receiving housing assistance; however, we will direct such individuals to other financial programs.

Participants will be placed in the program for six months, during which time Action, Inc. will offer support and case management to address the barriers to self-sufficiency. Each participant's status will be reviewed after the six-month mark. Those in need of additional assistance can continue with the program on a month-to-month basis, working toward self-sufficiency. As each participant progresses through the program, the amount of rental/mortgage assistance provided

will decrease, allowing a manageable transition to self-sufficiency. When a participant completes the program and no longer needs assistance, a new applicant will be able to join, creating the opportunity for rolling admissions. Except in extreme circumstances, all participants will complete the program within one year. Enrollment to full capacity will take place during the first six months following the beginning of the program; therefore, we anticipate the initial program period to last 18 months allowing for the possibility of participants' year-long enrollment.

In addition to financial help, participants will receive supportive services that may include, but are not limited to, assistance developing and maintaining a household budget, job search assistance, career training and education services, access to public benefits such as food stamps and MassHealth, counseling, and referrals to other services both within and apart from the programs Action, Inc. operates. Each participant will work with an Action, Inc. Client and Housing Services Advocate to define their particular goals (e.g. obtaining employment) and the steps necessary to achieve them.

The Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program will be supervised by Action, Inc.'s Director of Client and Housing Services, Maggie Howard. As Client and Housing Services Advocates, Jennifer Beloff and/or Deborah Eason will work directly with participants to provide financial counseling, case management, referrals, communication with landlords, and management of rental/mortgage subsidies. An Advocate will also work with each household to help them develop a budget, review and trim their expenses, begin a savings plan, start to pay past-due bills, and develop a plan to bring in more income, whether by accessing job training, seeking additional or alternative employment, or by some other means. The Advocate will work to ensure that participants are sticking to their budgets and working toward their goals. Program staff will meet with participants at Action, Inc.'s main office at 180 Main Street in Gloucester.

Community Preservation Criteria

The Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program meets several Community Preservation criteria. In keeping with the CPA general criteria, the program is consistent with several plans utilized by the City regarding Affordable Housing. The program is in line with the City of Gloucester's goal to *"tie economic development and affordable housing together to support quality of life for low and moderate income residents and business people in target areas, and throughout the community,"* as outlined in the 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan for the City of Gloucester. The Plan specifically mentions Action, Inc. as a partner in addressing Gloucester's need for affordable housing, stating: *"Housing needs in the very low income category are expected to be addressed by The Gloucester Housing Authority and non-profits such as Action, Inc."* The program will also prevent participants from becoming homeless, a possible result of unforeseen hardships which render low-income households unable to make rent or mortgage payments. Instead, the program will allow them to continue to live in their homes while working toward self-sufficiency.

The program will also meet category specific criteria for Affordable Housing. By allowing low-income residents to maintain their existing homes in communities throughout Gloucester, the program will promote a socioeconomic environment that encourages a diversity of income. The program will address the needs of a range of qualified households, including very low, low, and low-to-moderate income families and individuals, because it is focused on people with immediate financial hardships and barriers. The program will ensure long-term affordability by subsidizing rent/mortgage payments while participants are unable to afford them on their own,

and providing the services and support necessary to ensure that participants *will* be able to once again afford their homes following participation in the program.

The funding provided through the Gloucester CPA will be leveraged with private foundation funding, federal Community Services Block Grant funding, and in-kind supportive services provided by Action, Inc., such as help accessing public benefits, fuel assistance, job counseling and training, and more. The program is widely supported by the community (see *Community Support*, below).

Community Need

Action, Inc.'s Client and Housing Services division directly addresses the most pressing needs among low-to-moderate-income families living in the Cape Ann area. Our Advocates meet with household members face-to-face and conduct a comprehensive intake to assess specific needs and develop a plan for connecting families with services, resources, and referrals to assist them on the path toward greater self-sufficiency and stability.

In 2014 Action, Inc. conducted a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment which utilized a variety of methods, including interviews with key local officials and other stakeholders, focus groups of low-income community members, surveys distributed throughout our service area, and analysis of U.S. Census, Department of Labor, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and other data. This assessment identified the following top needs within Action, Inc.'s service area: affordable housing, employment opportunities, job training, heating/utility assistance, healthcare, food/nutrition, transportation, drug abuse resources/services, and mental health resources/services.

Action, Inc.'s Client and Housing Services Advocates work to help families address each of these identified needs, either directly or indirectly through referrals to other Action programs and partnering service providers. This grant would enable our Advocates to provide additional support to Gloucester families struggling specifically with housing issues, and with needs related to long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

Based largely on U.S. Census data, since Action, Inc. conducted our last Community Needs Assessment in 2011, Gloucester has experienced a population increase while experiencing a significant decrease in available and vacant housing units as well as a decrease in median per capita and household income. This grant would help Action, Inc. address a clear need for better access to affordable housing options on Cape Ann.

Action, Inc. stands apart within the Cape Ann community as a one-stop-shop for families in need, taking a holistic approach to foster greater self-sufficiency. While assisting directly with housing, public benefits, basic needs, and other issues, our Advocates are also able to refer clients to our in-house job training, adult education, alternative high school, HiSET preparation, home care, fuel assistance, and other programs. Where Action, Inc. cannot meet a need directly, we are able to tap into our network of more than a hundred partners at the local, state, and national levels.

Community Support and Long-Term Preservation

Action, Inc. has enjoyed strong community support for our Rockport Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program, which has been running for more than a decade. Over the course of the program, we have assisted approximately 40 households annually that had been at risk of

losing their homes. The amount of time participants have spent in the program has varied from as little as one month (for example, if the participant was able to secure a job early on), to as long as one year. During the 2014 program year, of 49 total participants 44 were able to maintain a budget for at least 90 days and were able to maintain their housing as a direct result of the program. It took an average of nine months for participants to become self-sufficient after joining. The Rockport program also experiences a low percentage of recidivism, demonstrating the success of the program in its goal of developing participants' self-sufficiency. Throughout the program's tenure, we have developed a strong relationship with the Rockport CPA, which has increased its support for the program year after year and allowed us to serve more and more households.

We expect similar success and community support in Gloucester, where the need for such a program is even greater. Housing related issues are the most frequently presented among those seeking help at Action, Inc. In addition to drawing from Action, Inc.'s own client base, we anticipate receiving many participant referrals from local churches, non-profit agencies, and the Gloucester Housing Authority. Working with the townspeople on a daily basis and communicating with area service organizations through regular meetings with the Cape Ann Resource Exchange (CARE), it is clear that our community is well aware of the need for affordable housing programs in Gloucester. Action, Inc. stands out as an agency capable of providing successful programs, having served Cape Ann's low-income population with a range of programs and services since 1965. Please visit our website at www.actioninc.org for an overview of our agency and the services we provide. ***Attached within this proposal are letters of support for the Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program.***

Measuring Success

Each participant will be subject to overall program guidelines, but will receive individualized attention and support to ensure personal success. Through regular budget counseling and case management provided by Action, Inc.'s Client and Housing Services Advocates, each participant's success will be tracked each month. As participants regain their ability to afford their rent/mortgage payments without the program subsidy, they will successfully complete the program, allowing another participant to take their place. After a participant has been with the program for six months, it will be determined whether or not the participant is able to complete the program. If not, the participant will be permitted to stay in the program on a month-to-month basis for up to six additional months, or longer in extreme circumstances where financial hardships are deemed more difficult to overcome.

Maintaining the Program

The Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program will be managed and maintained by experienced and dedicated Action, Inc. staff, including the Director of Client and Housing Services and two Client and Housing Services Advocates. Staff will work closely with each participant to develop and stick to a budget and related goals, and to move toward self-sufficiency. This may include referring the participant to other Action, Inc. programs, as well as outside programs and services. Once a participant has completed the program, Advocates will conduct follow-up calls to ensure the participant's continued self-sufficiency and to connect them with additional services as necessary.

Project Budget

CITY OF GLOUCESTER

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

BUDGET FORM

Project Name: Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program

Applicant: Action, Inc.

SOURCES OF FUNDING		
Source	Amount	Status
Community Preservation Act Fund	\$40,000	This proposal
Ludcke Foundation	\$50,000	Pending
Total Project Funding	\$90,000	
PROJECT EXPENSES		
Expense	Amount	Please indicate which expenses will be funded by CPA Funds:
30 subsidies at \$1650	\$49,500	15 subsidies: \$24,750
Staff salaries and fringe	\$38,500	Salary/fringe: \$13,250
Admin	\$2,000	Admin: \$2,000
Total Project Expenses	\$90,000	\$40,000

Multi-Year Funding

The Gloucester Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program will have a six-month enrollment period, and participants will be able to stay in the program for up to one year. Therefore, we anticipate the initial program period to last up to 18 months. Because we anticipate the need for the program to continue into the future, we will continue to seek additional funding throughout and following the initial program period, in order to serve more Gloucester households struggling to stay housed. We anticipate seeking future support from the Gloucester CPA as well as other public and private sources. We will also continue contributing Action, Inc. general funding and in-kind supportive services to the program.

Project Timeline

CITY OF GLOUCESTER

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Please provide a project timeline below, noting all project milestones. Please note that because the City Council must approve all appropriations, CPA funds may not be available until up to two months following Committee approval.

	Activity	Estimated Date
Project Start Date:	Begin advertisement of program (as needed), begin enrollment.	2.14.16
Project Milestone:	Select participants (ongoing process throughout the year). Gather necessary paperwork (i.e. proof of income, pay stubs, last year's income tax return, lease or mortgage paperwork). Send out landlord notification. Continue outreach and mailing applications as needed. Begin budget sessions for enrolled participants.	6.30.16
50% Completion Stage:	Program functioning at a minimum of ½ capacity. Continue budget meetings with participants. Provide appropriate referrals to other services and service providers (job counseling, benefits assistance, fuel assistance, employment and training programs, Mass Rehab, etc.). Continue making rental payments. Continue enrolling participants. Complete stabilization plans for participants exiting program.	9.30.16
Project Milestone:	Complete final enrollments for short-term participants (those needing assistance for six months or less). Work on completing stabilization plans for participants exiting program. Continue making rental payments and appropriate referrals for participants. Budget meetings continue.	12.31.16
Project Completion Date:	All payments completed to landlords. All remaining clients exited from program. Clients needing additional supports following completion of program have appointment(s) scheduled with advocate. Completion of stabilization plans as needed.	6.30.17

Feasibility

N/A

Maps

N/A

Visual Materials

N/A

Applicant Qualifications

About Action, Inc.

Action, Inc. was established in 1965 as a result of the Economic Opportunity Act, which began the War on Poverty and resulted in the formation of Community Action Agencies across the U.S. Action was among the first and aimed to address the underlying causes of poverty and provide programs that would help people move up the ladder of economic opportunity. In its early years, Action offered after-school programs and senior services. The agency expanded and increased its programs which now include the Client and Housing Services, COMPASS Youth Program, Energy Services, HomeCare, and Job Training and Education divisions. Energy Services now oversees conservation projects throughout MA.

Action is a leader in the community and has incubated other critical local services, including Open Door food pantry, Pathways for Children, Senior Care, Gloucester Senior Center, Meals on Wheels, and the Fisherman's Wives Association. All now operate as independent organizations and work together to create Cape Ann's safety net for those in need.

In 2009 Action added additional programs as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In 2011-2012 Action purchased land and began constructing new affordable housing for homeless families. We also initiated a High Risk Task Force and welcomed the North Shore Career Center as a tenant in our main building. In 2013 Action housed nine homeless families through the new Home Together program and secured housing for hard-to-place homeless individuals through the new Welcome Home program. And in 2014-2015 Action constructed and opened a brand new Adult Education and Training Center that will allow us to expand on our job training and education programs.

Action, Inc.'s primary programs include Client and Housing Services, COMPASS Youth Program, Energy Services, HomeCare, and Job Training and Education. Through these programs, we provide a broad range of services including: MassHealth and SNAP enrollment, case management, housing assistance, eviction prevention, homelessness prevention, day and night school programs for at-risk teens, HiSET preparation, academic and career counseling, weatherization, heating system repair and replacement, energy conservation, assistance with fuel and utility bills, in-home personal care services for elders and disabled adults, resume assistance, interview skills, job searches, healthcare training programs, adult education, emergency shelter, HOPWA housing program for people living with HIV/AIDS, affordable housing units, and substance abuse and mental health services.

Key Staff Qualifications

Maggie Howard, Director of Client and Housing Services: Maggie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Policy from William Smith College and a Master's of Nonprofit Management from Northeastern University. Prior to starting at Action, Inc. in 2007, Maggie worked at two Boston-based organizations that provide housing advocacy and support for homeless and formerly homeless households. Maggie has worked at Action, Inc. for the last eight years, serving as a Social Services Advocate, Director of Advocacy, and now as the Director of Client and Housing Services. In her current role, Maggie provides day-to-day support for Action's 30-bed emergency homeless shelter, manages Action's 62 tenant-based supportive housing subsidies, acts as the landlord for Action's three residential properties, and oversees the activities of the Client Services division. Maggie recently worked to secure funding to create the first Housing First supportive housing program on the North Shore of Massachusetts in order to provide permanent, stable housing to individuals experiencing long-term, chronic homelessness.

Jennifer Beloff, Client Services Advocate: Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from New Hampshire College and a Master's of Education from Lesley University. Prior to starting at Action, Inc. in 2013, she worked at Northeast Behavioral Health for 17 years. Jennifer served as the Education Director of Cornerstones, a nonprofit therapeutic day school for children with various educational and mental health needs, as well as the Program Director for the Community Based Acute Treatment Program for children ages 5-13. During her tenure at Cornerstones she worked with children and families from varying life circumstances with a broad range of academic, behavioral, housing, medical psychiatric, and community needs. In this role she became familiar with community services and state programs available to help families identify needs and apply for services. As an Action, Inc. Client Services Advocate Jennifer provides housing advocacy (e.g. assistance with housing searches, housing denials, evictions, and tenant rights), assists clients with the coordination of available public benefits and local resources (e.g. SNAP, MassHealth, SSDI, and SSI), provides rental arrearage counseling and budget reviews, and assists with applications for various financial resources as available. She also conducts outreach to the Cape Ann community to raise awareness of Action, Inc.'s resources, programs, and satellite offices.

Deborah Eason, Client Services Advocate: Deborah holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Suffolk University and has 22 years of experience in the health and human service field, working with low-income families in a variety of settings. She began her career as a Head Start Family Advocate on the North Shore, later becoming a Head Start Program Manager and delivering social service, mental health, and parent involvement services to 200 families. Deborah has worked with the Massachusetts General Hospital Community Partnership to reduce substance abuse in the Revere community and was a founding member of the Partnership's Revere Cares initiative, which successfully organized all sectors of the city to proactively address substance abuse issues. Prior to joining Action, Inc., Deborah spent 10 years with the Gloucester Housing Authority as a Certified Housing Manager, providing residential services to low-income families and the elderly. At Action, she served first as the HomeCorps Prevention Case Manager assisting Cape Ann area homeowners with mortgage loan modifications and the foreclosure process. Currently as an Action, Inc. Client Services Advocate, Deborah provides housing advocacy (e.g. assistance with housing searches, housing denials, evictions, and tenant rights), assists clients with the coordination of available public benefits and local resources (e.g. SNAP, MassHealth, SSDI, and SSI), provides rental arrearage counseling and budget reviews, and assists with applications for various financial resources as available.